

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A cage member engageable with a nut member having a first portion, a second portion and an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough, thereby providing a cage nut assembly, said cage member comprising:

a body configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said body defining a base portion and at least one wall portion, said body being configured to engage the first portion of the nut member such that the second portion of the nut member ~~is suspended off of~~ does not come into contact with either said base portion or said at least one wall portion such that said body provides a limited range of movement of the nut member in at least one dimension, said body configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member within the limited range of movement of the nut member provided by said body.

2. (Currently amended) A cage member as defined in claim 1, wherein said body further comprises at least one arm portion which extends from said base portion and serves to engage the first portion of the nut member ~~suspend the nut member off of the base portion.~~

3. (Original) A cage member as defined in claim 2, wherein said at least one arm portion comprises two arm portions which are positioned opposite of one another.

4. (Original) A cage member as defined in claim 3, wherein said base portion is rectangular such that said base portion has four corners, one of said arm portions extending from one of said corners of said base portion and said other one of said arm portions extending from another one of said corners of said base portion.
5. (Currently amended) A cage member as defined in claim 3, wherein said opposite facing arm portions define an opening therebetween, said opening sized to receive ~~a portion~~ of the nut member therethrough when the first portion of the nut member is engaged ~~suspended above said base portion of said cage member~~ by said two arm portions.
6. (Original) A cage member as defined in claim 5, wherein each said arm portion has a generally C-shaped portion, said C-shaped portions being positioned opposite one another and defining said opening.
7. (Original) A cage member as defined in claim 2, wherein said at least one arm portion is formed of a flexible material.
8. (Currently amended) A cage member as defined in claim 2, wherein said at least one arm portion can be moved to allow the second portion of the nut member to be positioned above said base portion of said body and between said at least one wall portion of said body.
9. (Cancelled).

10. (Currently amended) An assembly configured to receive a fastener, said assembly comprising:

a nut member having a first portion, a second portion and an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough; and

a cage member configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said cage member defining a base portion and at least one wall portion, said cage member being configured to engage the first portion of the nut member such that the second portion of said nut member ~~is suspended off of~~ does not come into contact with either said base portion or said at least one wall portion such that said cage member provides a limited range of movement of said nut member in at least one dimension, said body configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member within the limited range of movement of said nut member provided by said cage member.

11. (Currently amended) An assembly as defined in claim 10, wherein said cage member comprises at least one arm portion which extends from said base portion and serves to engage said first portion of said nut member ~~suspend said nut member off of said base portion.~~

12. (Original) An assembly as defined in claim 11, wherein said at least one arm portion comprises two arm portions which are positioned opposite of one another.

13. (Original) An assembly as defined in claim 12 wherein said base portion is rectangular such that said base portion has four corners, one of said arm portions extending from one of said corners of said base portion and said other one of said arm portions extending from another one of said corners of said base portion.

14. (Currently amended) An assembly as defined in claim ~~13~~ 27, wherein said opposite facing arm portions define an opening therebetween, said opening sized to receive ~~said member of~~ said nut member therethrough when said first portion of said nut member is engaged ~~suspended above said base portion of said cage member~~ by said two arm portions.

15. (Original) An assembly as defined in claim 14, wherein each said arm portion has a generally C-shaped portion, said C-shaped portions being positioned opposite one another and defining said opening.

16. (Currently amended) An assembly as defined in claim 14, wherein said two arm portions have top surfaces, said ~~second plate~~ first portion of said nut member being positioned on said top surfaces of said two arm portions ~~in order to suspend said first plate of said nut member above said base portion of said cage member, said lower surface of said second plate being positioned against said upper surfaces of said two arm portions~~ such that said second portion of said nut member does not come into contact with either said base portion or said at least one wall portion.

17. (Currently amended) An assembly as defined in claim 16, wherein ~~said lower surface of said second plate~~ first portion of said nut member has protrusions extending therefrom, said protrusions being positioned against said upper surfaces of said two arm portions.

18. (Previously presented) An assembly as defined in claim 16, wherein said base portion of said cage member has a generally planar upper surface, said upper surfaces of said two arm portions being generally parallel to said upper surface of said base portion of said cage member.

19. (Original) An assembly as defined in claim 11, wherein said at least one arm portion is formed of a flexible material.

20. (Currently amended) An assembly as defined in claim 11, wherein said at least one arm portion can be moved to allow said second portion of said nut member to be positioned above said base portion of said cage member and between said at least one wall portion of said cage member.

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Currently amended) A combination comprising:

a workpiece having first and second surfaces and an aperture provided therethrough;

a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough, said nut member having a threaded wall which defines at least a portion of said aperture of said nut member;

a cage member which is associated with said first surface of said workpiece, said cage member configured to encage said nut member and having an aperture formed therein which is aligned with said aperture of said workpiece and with said aperture of said nut member, said cage member defining a base portion and an upper portion, ~~said cage member being configured to engage said nut member such that said nut member is suspended off of said base portion~~ said upper portion of said cage member configured to engage said nut member and configured to be flexed downwardly by said nut member toward said base portion in order to allow said nut member to contact said base portion; and

a fastener having an enlarged head portion and an elongated shank extending therefrom, said enlarged head portion being associated with said second surface of said workpiece, said elongated shank extending through said aperture of said workpiece, through said aperture of said cage member, and being in threaded engagement with said threaded wall of said nut member.

23. (Original) A combination as defined in claim 22, wherein said cage member is welded to said first surface of said workpiece.

24. (Previously presented) A combination as defined in claim 28, wherein said lower surface of said first plate of said nut member interfaces said base portion of said cage member in order to provide a solid joint between said nut member, said cage member, said workpiece, and said fastener.

25. (Cancelled).

26. (Currently amended) A combination as defined in claim 28, wherein said upper portion of said cage member comprises at least one arm portion which extends from said base portion, said at least one arm portion having an upper surface which is in contact with said lower surface of said second plate of said nut member.

27. (Previously presented) An assembly as defined in claim 13, wherein said nut member has a first plate, a second plate and a member which connects said first plate to said second plate, each said plate having an upper surface and a lower surface, said member extending between said upper surface of said first plate and said lower surface of said second plate, said aperture of said nut plate extending through said first plate, said member and said second plate.

28. (Previously presented) A combination as defined in claim 22, wherein said nut member has a first plate, a second plate and a member which connects said first plate to said second plate, each said plate having an upper surface and a lower surface, said member extending between said upper surface of said first plate and said lower surface of said second plate, said aperture of said nut plate extending through said first plate, said member and said second plate.

29. (New) A cage member engageable with a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough to receive a fastener therein, thereby providing a cage nut assembly, said cage member comprising:

a body configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said body defining a base portion, said body engaging the nut member such that the nut member is suspended off of said base portion prior to the fastener being received in the aperture of the nut member.

30. (New) A cage member as defined in claim 29, wherein said body engages the nut member such that the nut member is suspended above said base portion.

31. (New) A cage member as defined in claim 29, wherein said body is further configured to provide a limited range of movement of the nut member in at least one dimension, said body configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member within the limited range of movement of the nut member provided by said body.

32. (New) A cage member as defined in claim 29, wherein said body further comprises at least one wall portion, said body being configured to engage the nut member such that the nut member does not come into contact with said at least one wall portion.

33. (New) A cage member as defined in claim 29, wherein said body further comprises at least one arm portion which extends from said base portion and serves to suspend the nut member off of said base portion prior to the fastener being received in the aperture of the nut member.

34. (New) An assembly configured to receive a fastener, said assembly comprising:

a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough to receive the fastener therein; and

a cage member configured to encage said nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said cage member defining a base portion, said body engaging said nut member such that said nut member is suspended off of said base portion prior to the fastener being received in said aperture of said nut member.

35. (New) A cage member as defined in claim 34, wherein said cage member engages said nut member such that said nut member is suspended above said base portion.

36. (New) An assembly as defined in claim 34, wherein said cage member is further configured to provide a limited range of movement of said nut member in at least one dimension, said cage member configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member within the limited range of movement of said nut member provided by said cage member.

37. (New) An assembly as defined in claim 34, wherein said cage member further comprises at least one wall portion, said cage member being configured to engage said nut member such that said nut member does not come into contact with said at least one wall portion.

38. (New) An assembly as defined in claim 34, wherein said cage member further comprises at least one arm portion which extends from said base portion and serves to suspend said nut member off of said base portion prior to the fastener being received in said aperture of said nut member.

39. (New) A cage member engageable with a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough, thereby providing a cage nut assembly, said cage member comprising:

a body configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said body defining a base portion, said body having an upper portion configured to engage the nut member such that the nut member is freely suspended above the base portion when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member.

40. (New) A cage member engageable with a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough, thereby providing a cage nut assembly, said cage member comprising:

a body configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to the aperture of the nut member when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said body defining a base portion, said body having an upper portion configured to engage said nut member such that the nut member is freely suspended from said upper portion when the nut member is generally encaged by said cage member.

41. (New) An assembly configured to receive a fastener, said assembly comprising:

a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough; and

a cage member configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said cage member defining a base portion, said cage member having an upper portion configured to engage said nut member such that said nut member is freely suspended above said base portion when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member.

42. (New) An assembly configured to receive a fastener, said assembly comprising:
a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough; and
a cage member configured to encage the nut member and having an aperture formed therein, said aperture configured to allow access to said aperture of said nut member when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member, said cage member defining a base portion, said cage member having an upper portion configured to engage the nut member such that said nut member is freely suspended from said upper portion when said nut member is generally encaged by said cage member.

43. (New) A method of securing a fastener to a workpiece, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) providing the workpiece having first and second surfaces and an aperture provided therethrough;
- b) providing the fastener having an enlarged head portion and an elongated shank extending therefrom;
- c) providing a nut member having an aperture which extends at least partially therethrough to define an aperture wall;
- d) providing a cage member configured to encage said nut member and having an aperture formed therein which is generally aligned with said aperture of said workpiece and with said aperture of said nut member, said cage member defining a base portion and an upper portion;
- e) engaging said nut member with said upper portion of said cage member such that said nut member is suspended off of said base portion such that said nut member does not come into contact with said base portion;
- f) securing said cage member to said first surface of said workpiece; and
- g) securing said fastener to said nut member by inserting said elongated shank of said fastener through said apertures of said workpiece, said cage member and said nut member such that said elongated shank of said fastener engages said aperture wall of said nut member, such that said enlarged head portion of said fastener is generally positioned against said second surface of said workpiece, and such that said upper portion of said cage member allows said nut member to come into contact with said base portion of said cage member.